

Things Americans Don't Know About Afghanistan But Should

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Why are we there?

“We have a clear and focused goal: to disrupt, dismantle and defeat al Qaeda in Pakistan and Afghanistan, and to prevent their return to either country in the future. That's the goal that must be achieved. That is a cause that could not be more just.”

President Barak Hussein Obama, March 27, 2009

How long will we be there?

- On December 1, 2009, the President announced we will begin withdrawing troops within 18 months.
- White House officials immediately made it clear that we will have a long-term presence in logistical support, training, and reconstruction.



What part of the country is safest and why

- **Rural Afghanistan in the north near the Stans and China**
- **Where and when it is too cold to grow poppy, again in the north and winter**
- **Insurgents and criminals are not interested there**

What part of the country is most dangerous and why

- All urban areas or soft, embarrassing or Afghan government targets
- When and where Taliban are most available: summer, post-poppy harvest
- Near Iran in the South and West for poppy where the Taliban move cash
- Near Pakistan in the South and East where insurgents come and go



BEST Things

- Wealth of natural resources
- Superb agricultural potential
- Hospitable and gracious people
- Highly intelligent, multi-tasking women
- Large number of ambitious, motivated, idealist young people
- Billions of bucks in reconstruction

Wealth of natural resources

- Oil, gas, coal, hydropower
- Copper and iron ores
- Beryllium, cadmium, cesium, lithium, uranium
- Gemstones and marble
- Water resources



American Nuristan
A beauty that lasts forever



EMERALD
PANJSHIR VALLEY,
AFGHANISTAN



PHOTO BY JACK LOWELL

Superb agricultural potential

- Perfect climate for horticulture
- Low humidity/rain in growing season
- Few serious pests and diseases
- Big difference between day/night temperatures for best ripening, strong color and high sugar content
- Winter rain for efficient harvesting
- Abundant water



Seriously hospitable and gracious people

- **Strong commitments to family and tribe**
- **Greet and shake hands with ALL the men you meet**
- **Touch your right hand to your chest**
- **Shake hands and hug when you leave**
- **An Afghan friend is a friend for life**
- **Friends protect you from harm**
- **Friendship is important in business**



Highly intelligent and multi-tasking women

- **Women marry young, have many children and run their large households**
- **Households are extended families**
- **Women feed, water, dress, clean, entertain, educate, medicate, serve their households**
- **Women have key roles in very challenging activities such as Ramadan**



Many ambitious, motivated, idealistic young people

- English language, computer, medical, trade schools, colleges and universities rapidly growing in the cities
- Afghans always ask questions of expatriates
- Quick to learn business and office practices
- Entrepreneurial



Billions of donor bucks are going into reconstruction

- **U.S. spends >\$10 billion annually**
- **Asian Development Bank, World Bank**
- **Belgium, British, Canadian, Dutch, German, Indian, Italian, Japanese, etc. governments**
- **Many humanitarian and non-governmental organizations**

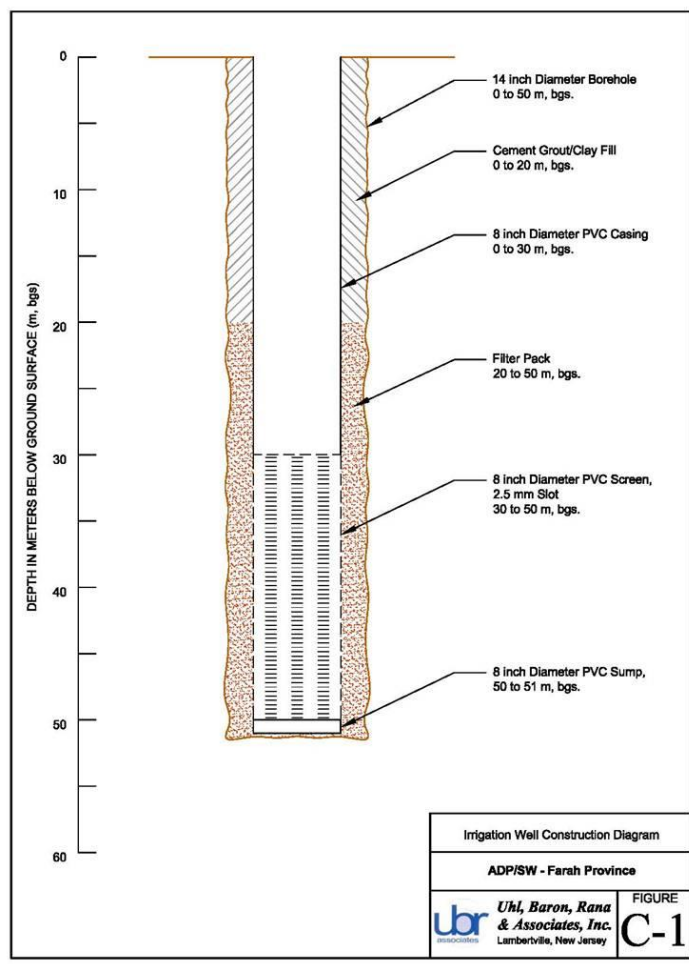


American Firms in Action

ACDI/VOCA, AECOM, AED, AMEC, ARD, Bearing Point, Cadmus, CDM, CH2M-Hill, Checchi, Chemonics, CNFA, Creative Associates, CRS, DAI, Fluor, Louis Berger, IRD, IRG, Jacobs, Land O'Lakes, Mercy Corps, Michael Baker, MSI, MWH, Nathan Associates, Parsons, Perini, Roots of Peace, Save the Children, Tetrattech, URS, Vega...

What action?

Physical infrastructure – airports, energy plants and transmission, transportation (roads, bridges), vertical structures (schools, hospitals, offices, military camps, markets and malls, government buildings), drinking-water supplies and distribution, wastewater collection and treatment systems, wells, dams, irrigation systems...



More action

**Agricultural and vocational training,
health, education, democracy and
governance, banking and trade, small
and medium business support, IT**

WORST Things

- Insurgency, terrorism, fundamentalism, opportunistic theft, insecurity, government instability, lawlessness
- Differences settled by violence and feuds; every family is well armed; honor killings and killing honored
- Poor infrastructure

More WORST things

- Corruption, nepotism, cronyism, bribery, kickbacks, graft, discriminatory law enforcement
- Illiteracy and poorly educated where educated at all, child labor, restrictions on women

Even more WORST things

- Ethnic/tribal conflict; family/tribal commitments; domestic violence
- Illicit drugs, drug addiction, smuggling
- Low work ethic and Islamic challenges

Yet even more WORST things

- Challenging private-sector, Afghanistan government, and some donor business practices
 - deals are flexible
 - contracts not honored
 - payments late or dissolved

Environmental Triage ⁱⁿ Afghanistan



Afghan Environ Challenges

- Deforestation from decades of war and opportunistic lumbering
- High winds remove much unprotected soil, increase water erosion and leave behind gravel, cobbles, rock, sediment
- Destroyed natural lakes and habitats
- Soil salinization and desertification
- Poor water collection/distribution, solid waste, wastewater/ sanitation systems



Barney's typical life there

- Train Afghans, Americans, others in environmental engineering, sound and sustainable design, compliance with donor contracts or grants, project monitoring and evaluation
- Trailer, guest house, hotel, military base
- Movements restricted; body armor



Culture matters

A COLA salesman is sent to the Middle East to open the market for Cola.

He doesn't speak any of the languages.

He thinks these graphics will sell COLA.

What do you think?



Queries?

